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ABSTRACT

This report explores the effects of "DARE To Resist Drugs and Violence" program on students' knowledge regarding drugs and alcohol and their attitudes toward authority figures (i.e., teachers and law enforcement officers) involved in the program. Project DARE was presented in 10 consecutive lessons (two days per week for five weeks) to 103 eighth grade students involved in a life skills course in Los Angeles, California. Students are instructed on various refusal skills that can be put to use when they are confronted with situations involving potential sexual activity or violence, as well as drug or alcohol abuse. Pre- and post-tests regarding knowledge, attitudes, and conflict resolution skills were administered and the scores were analyzed for significant difference. Students were also given a teacher constructed questionnaire examining attitudes toward use of drugs and alcohol by parents and peers, and their belief in the efficacy of DARE as an intervention. Both the pre- and post-tests scores were low. The results of the teacher-made questionnaire ran in direct opposition with the goals of the DARE program. The negative experiences and various concerns of the teachers involved are discussed. There is a distinct lack of evidence of efficacy about the DARE program; various studies have shown that it does not keep kids off drugs. In spite of these findings, the program maintains extremely high levels of school and community support and DARE's promoters are reluctant to regroup, reevaluate, or redesign the program. (MKA)

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A Report of Outcomes of Project D.A.R.E. with Eighth Grade Students

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Statement of Problem

What is the effect of the D.A.R.E. program on students' knowledge regarding drugs and alcohol, and their attitude toward authority figures (teachers, law enforcement officers)?

Method

Lifeskills is a required course for eighth grade students in the Natrona County School District of Casper, Wyoming. At the time the D.A.R.E. curriculum was presented, these students met for one semester, Tuesdays and Thursdays for a 45 minute class period, attending physical education on alternating days. The course called for some sort of drug education/prevention material to be presented, and it was left to the individual teacher to decide what would be appropriate. Previously, Lifeskills had incorporated various handouts and materials from random sources but the statistics and facts were severely dated. Fresh material was a priority in order to validate the course.

Project D.A.R.E. was presented in 10 consecutive lessons (two days per week for five weeks) to eighth grade students (N=103) in the Lifeskills course. D.A.R.E. to Resist Drugs and Violence is an adaptation of the original Drug Abuse Resistance Education program, in that it instructs students on various refusal skills that can be put to use when they are confronted with situations involving potential sexual activity or violence, as well as drug or alcohol use. D.A.R.E. is labeled as a curriculum of the Los Angeles Unified School District to be implemented with law enforcement officers as teachers, and teachers "...maintaining a supportive role in classroom management while the officer is teaching." Pre and post-tests regarding knowledge, attitudes and conflict resolutin skills were administered and the scores were analyzed for significant differences. Students were also given a teacher constructed questionnaire examining attitudes toward use of drugs and alcohol by parents and peers, and their belief in the efficacy of D.A.R.E. as an intervention.

Results

One major stumbling block in the assessment of student progress through the program, is that the pre-test and post-test are composed of different questions measuring different things. The pre-test and post-test are each composed of 20 questions - 17 asking questions regarding attitude and three regarding facts. Neither test contains the same questions.This being the case, Jill chose to combine the two, in order to attempt a more accurate measure of change in the scores.

Preliminary review of the data indicated strong changes in student scores from pre to post-test, several of which were statistically significant. As expected, most pre-test scores were low. Interestingly, the post-test score averages, after treatment, still did not fall into the generally accepted "passing" range of 70% or higher. The students' scores went from an "F" to a "D."

PRE/POST TEST RESULTS FROM D.A.R.E. PROGRAM (N=103)

NUMBER OF CORRECT ANSWERS OUT OF 40 QUESTIONS

PERIOD	PRE	POST	PRE%	POST%
1	17.5	28.5	44	71
2	23.5	29.8	59	75
3	13.4	27.7	34	69
6	25.6	28.5	64	71
7	23.1	27.5	58	69
8	20.6	18.6	52	47
AVERAGE	20.6	26.7	52%	67%

A teacher made questionnaire was administered at the end of the class to further assess any change in student attitudes toward local drug and alcohol use, and to attempt to measure the students' belief that D.A.R.E. and similar drug education programs are indeed effective in alleviating these problems. Interestingly, the findings of the questionnaire run in direct opposition to the goals of the D.A.R.E. program. When answering the questions after the course, students showed a greater tolerance toward drug and alcohol use by family and friends, and had less faith that D.A.R.E. would help them make wiser choices in the future. The following shows percentages

of "yes" answers only.

1. Do you think drinking alcoholic beverages is O.K?

   pre - 56% post - 72%

2. Do you think using drugs is O.K.?

   pre - 18% post - 28%

3. Does it bother you that your parents drink or use drugs?

   pre - 26% post - 18%

4. Does it bother you that your friends drink or use drugs?

   pre - 31% post - 24%

5. Do you feel participating in the D.A.R.E. program will help you make better choices in the future?

   pre - 43% post - 31%

Discussion

"When an opponant declares, 'I will not come over to your side, ' I calmly say,

'Your child belongs to us already..."

- Adolf Hitler (Shirer, 1960, p. 249)

Most people would agree the United States has a huge problem with drug and alcohol abuse. Several programs have been implemented to combat this problem by altering user attitudes, but none is more widely promoted in the U.S. than Project D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education). D.A.R.E. to Resist Drugs and Violence for eighth grade students is a federally funded drug and alcohol education and violence prevention program that is administered by uniformed officers.

The program emphasizes "just say no" tactics through rehearsing pre-written role plays and workbook exercises. The role plays are intended to teach students various refusal skills that can be put to use when they are confronted with drug or alcohol use, sexual activity or situations that have a potential for violence. Unfortunately, students report that in their experiences, the role plays do not reflect

reality. Typical comments are, "Yeah, I'd say that, and then everyone would really think I'm a dork!" Self image is extremely fragile in adolescents therefore anything that could possibly make them look less "cool" will not be considered. The consensus among the eighth grade students is that no amount of role play will make it easier to stand alone when confronted with their friends' behaviors.

The commitment to refuse must come from within, and be borne of strong self image and self worth, things with which most adolescents struggle. Keister (1994, p. 136) takes exception with the idea that self worth can be taught. She wrote, "Self esteem and self confidence don't come from being told you're great. You get them by facing challenges and mastering them through hard work and persistence." Though the D.A.R.E. program does involve self esteem training, it is self esteem through external approval, as indicated by the graduation ceremony, T-shirts, parades, etc., not through internal beliefs or even a desire for one's own safety. In eighth grade society, whether one is a leader or a follower, self preservation is defined by belonging. If drug, alcohol, tobacco or other destructive behaviors are prerequisites, that price is often deemed acceptable.

Jill was approached with the offer to present the D.A.R.E. to Resist Drugs and Violence curriculum in the Fall of 1994. She had just begun teaching a class for seventh and eighth grade students called Lifeskills - a sort of sex, drugs and rock-n-roll introduction to the less academic, but more universal choices students would likely be forced to make over the course of their lives. As there was no set curriculum for the class, with exception of the human sexuality component, she was very pleased (and relieved) to have this opportunity presented. Jill's son had graduated from sixth grade D.A.R.E. in 1992 and related the experience as a positive one.

The class Jill was to implement was geared specifically for eighth grade students who had already been exposed to the sixth grade version of the D.A.R.E. program. All classes would be taught by an officer with the Casper Police Department.

Jill's role was to be as described in the D.A.R.E. facilitator's handbook;

"The classroom teacher should maintain a supportive role in classroom management while the officer is teaching and should incorporate D.A.R.E. program participationy students as an integral part of the students' final evaluation" (Los Angeles Unified School District, 1991, p. v).

If there was any question of why a law enforcement officer should take on the role of teacher when he or she isnot trained to be one, it was answered in the next paragraph of the Instructional Manual;

"The use of sworn, street-experienced, trianed law enforcement officers/deputies has proven to be a highly effective strategy in helping to provide credible drug education for students. It is this credibility that narrows the discrepancy between the relevancy of information being imparted in the classroom and the reality of what is happening in the 'real world' " (Los Angeles Unified School District, 1991, p. v).

The course was laid out in very precise lessons, each one dealing with a different aspect of drug and alcohol abuse. On being introduced to the class, the officer was to write his or her name on the board and announce that he or she would be the students' D.A.R.E. officer for the next ten class sessions. As the eighth grade class met Tuesday and Thursday only, the class lasted for five weeks. The next instruction was to distribute D.A.R.E. materials and explain their use. At the first class, Jill was presented with a coffee mug, paper clip holder, bumper sticker and license plate frame, all with the D.A.R.E. logo. Jill's students received workbooks. Several students wanted to know why she got all the "good stuff" without taking the course. At that moment, Jill said she wished she'd had T-shirts for all the students reading, "My teacher had D.A.R.E. in our class and all I got was this lousy workbook." This was the note on which the first class began.

Students were asked who all had participated in D.A.R.E. in elementary school,

and how many remembered their instructing officer's name. When asked what they remembered most about the program, in every class and without fail, students responded, "The skating party!" They were very disappointed to learn that eighth graders were considered too old for such things.

The students and instructor read the opening introduction in the workbooks together, which included the following;

"The officer/deputy and your teacher will help you as you and your classmates discuss the juvenile justice system, issues of concern to teenagers, and the consequences of alcohol and other drug use. You will have a chance to practice being assertive when you refuse drug offers and deal with situations involving anger and conflict. Finally, you will be asked to write a personal commitment to remain drug-free and to resolve angry feelings and conflicts without resorting to violence" (Los Angeles Unified School District, 1991, p.iv).

All in ten lessons. If this sounds like a silver bullet, don't be amazed. It is expected to perform like one. The instructing officer was asked a hypothetical, but realistic question during the first session. "If I do all the bookwork and pass the tests, but refuse to commit to a totally drug-free lifestyle, will I fail the course? What he was really being asked was, "Should I tell you what I've learned, or what I know you want to hear?" Therein lies the problem with D.A.R.E.

There is a distinct lack of evidence of efficacy about the D.A.R.E. program. In spite of the approximately $700,000,000 to $750,000,000 spent per year, there is virtually no research supporting the claim that D.A.R.E. does what it is intended to do, mainly, keep kids off drugs (Cauchon, 1993, D1). In a study of Kentucky students between 1987 and 1992, the National Institute on Drug Abuse found "no statistically significant differences between experimental groups and control groups in the percentage of new users of..cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, alcohol and marijuana" (Cauchon, 1993, p. D1).

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, a meta-analysis of D.A.R.E. outcome evaluations results showed the effect size for drug use behavior ranged from .00 to .11 across eight studies; the weighted mean for drug use across studies was .06. The conclusion was that for all outcomes being considered, the D.A.R.E. effect size means were substantially smaller than those of other programs emphasizing social competencies and using more interactive teaching strategies. In the last paragraph, the main report read, "An important implication is that D.A.R.E. could be taking the place of other, more beneficial drug use curricula that adolescents could be receiving. D.A.R.E.'s limited influence on adolescent drug use behavior contrasts with the program's popularity and prevalence" (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1994, p. 1399). The U.S. General Accounting Office reported, "There is little evidence so far that D.A.R.E. and other resistance training programs have reduced the use of drugs by adolescents" (General Accounting Office, 1993, p. 25). In a Justice Department sponsored study by the Research Triangle Institute (RTI), D.A.R.E. was found to have a "limited to essentially nonexistant effect on drug use" (Bovard, 1994, p. 3). RTI was hired to survey and evaluate all available published research on D.A.R.E. Lead researcher Ennett (1994) concluded that only eight published studies were statistically valid and that of the eight, all found the program's effects on adolescent drug use to "range from limited to nonexistent" (p. 121). Tobler (1992) found in her research that of 114 drug education programs, more than 70 scored higher than D.A.R.E. in curtailing drug use.

School officials in Kokomo, Indiana commissioned the first assessment of the long-term effects of the program in 1991. Researchers compared rates of drug use of members of the 1991 senior class, which had no exposure to D.A.R.E., to rates of drug use of the 1992 senior class, which was exposed to D.A.R.E. in seventh grade. No significant differences between the groups were found regarding self-reports of lifetime drug use, frequency of drug use or age of first drug use. One exception," said Evans

and Bosworth, "was that seniors who had been exposed to D.A.R.E. reported significantly higher rates of use of hallucinogens over the thirty days prior to answering the questionnaire" (Wysong, Aniskiewicz, Wright, 1991, p. 448).

In spite of these findings, D.A.R.E. maintains extremely high levels of school and community support nationwide. "One reason for this faith may stem from our inability to produce a true control group for research purposed," said Kochis (1993, p. 42). "There are virtually no uncontaminated sample youths in this country. Adolescents are inundated with anti-drug messages through video stations (e.g., MTV "rock Against Drugs"), school health curricula, television commercials and public service announcements, bumper stickers for cars (e.g., "Just Say No), etc. Controlling these intervening factors and isolating D.A.R.E. as the factor of greatest influence is methodologically problematic. At best, a comparison group may be controlled for the formal D.A.R.E. curriculum."

Noted humanist psychologist Rogers' model of the therapeutic classroom was a founding point for the D.A.R.E. program. The idea was that by empowering children through information and skill-building, they would be able to make independent choices and resist peer pressure to engage in unhealthy behaviors (Stackel, 1994, p.20). Before Rogers died in 1987, he declared the "therapeutic classroom" a total failure, concluding that children should not be empowered to make criical life decisions through nondirective therapy. "Kids need more guidance than adults," he said, and feared that once "empowered", they might continue to make poor choices later on.

According to Bovard (1994) a conference on drug education was held in March of 1993 where social science workers agreed that after ten years of operation, there was little evidence that D.A.R.E. actually reduced drug use among the young. One of the earliest advisors to the D.A.R.E. program Hanson, has stated, "I think the program should be entirely scrapped and redeveloped anew."

The original concept of D.A.R.E., according to Broman, was to be more of an information pipeline than an educatinal tool to fight drug abuse. The idea for D.A.R.E. originally grew out of frustration experienced by then Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) chief Daryl Gates, who knew drug traffic was rampant in schools, but had no way to stem the flow. Officers went under cover as high school students to sell drugs in routine sting operations. This proved easy, as there were always customers, but it did little to slow the movement of drugs in the schools. In 1987, the ACLU filed a complaint, stating that, "When other adults try to get young people involved with drugs, we call it contributing to the delinquency of a minor. When the LAPD does it, we call it the school-buy program" (Bovard, 1994, p. 1). Gates determined that winning the trust of students would be the key to closing the floodgates of drugs in schools. The result was D.A.R.E. According to Bovard (1994), a report isssued by the Bureau of Justice Assistance in 1988 stated that "students have an opportunity to become aquainted with the (police) officer as a trusted friend who is interested in their happiness and welfare. Students occasionally tell the officer about problems such as abuse, neglect, alcoholic parents, or relatives who use drugs" (p. 2). Although Silverman, a spokesperson for National D.A.R.E. headquarters says that when students begin the program, they are specifically advised not to talk about their parents or friends, and that officers are in the classroom as teachers, not law enforcement officials, she also states, "Anytime a child makes a disclosure of parental drug use to an officer, he/she would be required, like any other teacher, to report that to the proper authorities or agencies" (Stackel, 1994, p. 20).

Parents and teachers generally have much greater periods of time invested in getting to know the student than police officers, who are present for 10 to 17 total contact hours. Yet time and again, police officers are listed along with parents, friends and teachers as names of people to tell if ...a friend finds some pills" or who to inform if they are "asked to keep a secret." While building a relationship with a police officer

can be very empowering and a positive experience for adolescents, the degree of intimacy established would not be comparable to parental and other relationships which are not developed in such a short period of time. In several instances, this confidence building has caused severe backlash, when students, believing they were doing something good for family members, called police to report drug use in their homes. Stackel (1994) tells of nine year old Darrin Davis who said, "At school, they told us if we ever see drugs to call 911 because people who use drugs need help. I thought the police would come get the drugs and tell my parents drugs were wrong. In court, the police told the judge that I wanted my mom and dad arrested. That's a lie. I did not tell them that" (p. 3). How much faith will that child have in authority figures in the future?

It is common practice to put a D.A.R.E. box in the classroom, though one was not put in Jill's. Students are instructed they may put in anonymous questions or information they may have on drug use. No distinction is made between legal and illegal (minors in possession of Robitussen cough syrup instead of alcohol) and use and abuse (drinking an entire bottle of cough syrup as opposed to one glass of wine).

Jill's observation of student reactions to D.A.R.E. is not uncommon. Unfortunately, most people believe that the program must be good becauseit isin use virtually nationwide. A wise, anonymous once said, if 40 million people believe in a dumb idea, it's still a dumb idea. The following are our gravest concerns about the program and its impact on our children's futures.

1. The concept of "use" whether legally by adults or illegally by minors is never approached. It is implied that any use is, by definition, abuse, therefore, moderation or so-called sensible drinking habits are never considered. What message does this give adolescents whose parents drink, however little, on a daily basis? By D.A.R.E.'S definition, a family who enjoys a glass of wine with dinner every day, is a family of alcoholics. The message is confusing.

2. The pre and post-tests attempt to measure attitude, asking confusing and sometimes misleading questions. The first question on the post-test reads as follows:

1. A victim is a person who

a. is cheated

b. is blamed for something he or she didn't do

c. suffers some loss

d. takes drugs

The "correct" answer is "c" (suffers some loss). Is one who has been cheated then, not a victim? Isn't a victim sometimes wrongly blamed? Can a person not be a victim and take drugs at the same time? Question five is more confusing yet.

5. The results of something a person chooses to do or chooses not to do are called

a. choices

b. penalties

c. behavior risks

d. consequences

If you chose "a" (choices) because the question talks about choosing, you are incorrect. The answer is "d" (consequences).

The effect of this test is to tell students that, even though they may know another answer is also true, it is not as good as the answer that they tell you is correct. Unfortunately, there is no explanation given as to why something a person chooses to do is not considered a "choice." When pressed to explain, our officer replied, "Because it's that way in the book."

3. When we discuss a person's "right to say no," we imply they also have a right to say "yes."

4. Along with the other rights children are said to be guaranteed, D.A.R.E. promises the "right to be happy." If this goal is not achieved, is the teaching officer to

be held responsible? To whom does a dissatisfied child turn when happiness is not forthcoming?

5. It is maintained that marijuana is the number one "gateway drug" of first choice used by adolescents. Most research argues with this, citing tobacco and alcohol as far more popular and more accessable first drugs of choice. There is little research that suggests marijuana leads to other drug use, any more than alcohol or tobacco, other than that it may be experimented with, along with a plethora of other mind altering substances until the user finds one he or she prefers or gives them up altogether (Weil, Rosen, 1993, p. 120). Experimentation does not automatically equal addiction. Still, D.A.R.E. spends very little time on tobacco or alcohol use, dealing almost exclusively with illegal substances. In the face of 500,000 tobacco related deaths each year (Stop Teenage Addiction to Tobacco, 1994) and the huge social and financial burden alcohol puts this nation under, it seems ludicrous to spend time on anything else, as both of these substances are illegal for asolescents to possess or use.

6. D.A.R.E., by placing police officers in the classroom with two weeks of training, undermines the student view of the teacher as a professional. Would any teacher attempt to take on an officer's job with two weeks of training in law enforcement? Certainly not. Therefore, why should a layperson be expected to successfully interpret and teach an already confusing curriculum? This promotes the idea that teaching is not really a profession, that anyone can teach if they just follow the lesson plan, and that successful teaching strategy begins with classroom management, not student engagement.

7. D.A.R.E. is funded on the basis of legislation, not efficacy. One of the provisions of the Drug Free Schools and Community Act of 1986 was that 10% of state grants go toward curricula that are specifically "taught in classrooms by uniformed police officers" (Stackel, 1994, p. 19). D.A.R.E. was the only program that satisfied that

requirement. In the D.A.R.E. Implementation Guide, school districts must sign an agreement allowing D.A.R.E. materials to be injected in other subject material. Why is such a questionable program so popular?

"Packaging," says Tobler. Drug education programs written in the 1970's and 80's "were written to be duplicated and make money," with little or no money or effort spent on evaluation. "Teachers look at programs like D.A.R.E., see they're well-written and well-packaged and think, 'this should keep the students interested'" (Stackel, 1994, p. 20).

D.A.R.E. Executive Director Levant, when faced with research supporting D.A.R.E.'s ineffectiveness said, "Scientists will tell you that bumblebees can't fly, but we know better" (Cauchon, 1993, p. D1). Even in the face of overwhelming evidence, promoters of D.A.R.E. refuse to regroup, reevaluate or redesign the program. citing anecdotal evidence and student comments of, "I don't need it, but someone else might," officers often say, "If we reach only one kid, it's worth all the effort." Would any other curriculum such as math, be declared a success if only one out of 28 students learned to add? Hardly. Certainly not, if the one kid is Darrin Davis.

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